

Claims:

1. An oropharyngeal airway device for location in a patient's mouth through the mouth cavity to maintain an unobstructed passageway extending from outside the patient's mouth to a position past a posterior aspect of the patient's tongue, said device including:
 - a unitary tube having a passage therethrough;
 - a locating flange provided at a proximal end of a first portion of said tube to form, in combination with said first portion, at least part of a mouthpiece defining an inlet to said passage, the flange adapted to locate adjacent an outer surface of the patient's mouth when the first portion of the tube extends into the mouth cavity,
 - said tube having a second portion extending from said first portion, the second portion having a distal end which defines an outlet to the tube and which is adapted to extend to a location closely adjacent the base of the tongue,
 - wherein the outlet at the distal end of the tube is defined by a first opening that is configured to align with the opening to the larynx; and
 - wherein the second portion of the tube also includes a second opening in a posterior surface, the second opening adapted to align with the junction of the nasopharynx with the oropharynx.
2. The device as claimed in claim 1, wherein the tube is in use, generally hook shaped with the first portion being substantially straight and the second portion being of an arcuate form, extending obliquely from the first portion and configured to follow the pharyngeal arc defined by the passage from the rear of the patient's mouth cavity through the oropharynx to a location adjacent the glottis.
3. The device as claimed in claim 2, wherein the first opening is defined by an end of the tube that is oblique to the axis of the tube so that the leading edge is adjacent the inside of the hook shaped formation.
4. The device as claimed in any one of claims 1 to 3, wherein the second opening has a fusiform profile.
5. The device as claimed in any one of the preceding claims, wherein the second posterior opening is fully surrounded by the tube material.

6. The device as claimed in claim any one of the preceding claims, wherein the second posterior opening includes a resiliently openable split type formation that extends from the second posterior opening to the distal end of the tube.

5 7. The device as claimed in claim 6, wherein the edges of the split type formation are tapered obliquely.

8. The device as claimed in any one of the preceding claims, wherein the distal end
10 of the tube also includes a protuberance configured to locate the device by engagement in the vallecula between the epiglottis and the back of the tongue.

9. The device as claimed in any one of the preceding claims, wherein the distal end
15 of the tube also includes a protuberance configured to locate the device by engagement in the vallecula between the epiglottis and the back of the tongue and the leading edge of the first opening forms the locating protuberance.

10. The device as claimed in claim 9, wherein the leading edge is rounded or swollen.

20 11. The device as claimed in any one of the preceding claims, wherein the axis of the tube at the outlet is approximately perpendicular to the axis of the tube at the inlet or mouthpiece.

25 12. The device as claimed in any one of the preceding claims, wherein the external wall of the tube is generally elliptical when viewed in transverse cross-section.

13. An oropharyngeal airway device that is configured to include internal markings for the purpose of guiding an endoscope therethrough.

30 14. An oropharyngeal airway device for location in a patient's mouth through the mouth cavity to maintain an unobstructed passageway extending from outside the patient's mouth to a position past a posterior aspect of the patient's tongue, said device including:

a unitary tube having a passage therethrough; and

a locating flange provided at a proximal end of a first portion of said tube to form, in combination with said first portion, at least part of a mouthpiece defining an inlet to said passage, the flange adapted to locate adjacent an outer surface of the patient's mouth when the first portion of the tube extends into the mouth cavity,

said tube having a second portion extending from said first portion, the second portion having a distal end which defines an outlet to the tube and which is adapted to extend to a location closely adjacent the base of the tongue,

wherein the device includes internal markings for the purpose of guiding an endoscope therethrough.

15. The device as claimed in claim 13 or 14, wherein the internal surface has a finish that is relatively non reflective and the markings formed to contrast with this finish.

16. The device as claimed in claim 13, 14 or 15 wherein the markings are made by way of printing, embossing, or a combination of the same.

17. The device as claimed in any one of claims 13 to 16, wherein the low reflective finish is applied to the device as a coating.

18. The device as claimed in any one of claims 13 to 17, wherein the low reflective finish is inherent in the material from which the device is manufactured.

19. The device as claimed in any one of claims 1 to 12, wherein the tube includes markings, for the purpose of guiding an endoscope therethrough, that are positioned on the interior surface of the tube opposite the second opening which then extend to the first opening and outlet of the passage at the distal end of the tube.

20. The device as claimed in claim 19, wherein the markings are in the form of "runway" type markings configured to identify the central axis of that innermost surface of the device.

21. The device as claimed in claim 20, wherein the markings are adapted to indicate proximity from the outlet.

22. The device as claimed in any one of claims 19, 20 or 21 wherein the periphery of all openings in at least the second portion of the tube will be similarly marked in contrast to the rest of the internal surface of the tube.

5 23. The device as claimed in any one of the preceding claims, wherein the mouthpiece includes means for providing rigidity that are adapted to prevent the patient biting down and blocking the passage.

10 24. The device as claimed in claim 23, wherein the tube portion is produced from a relatively soft, flexible resilient material and the means for providing rigidity in the mouthpiece include a reinforcing insert or attachment of another more rigid material.

15 25. The device as claimed in any one of claims 1 to 12 and 19 to 24, wherein the flange of the mouthpiece is formed integral with the tube or the reinforcing insert.

26. The device as claimed in claim 25, wherein the flange includes hook formations or openings for the attachment of securing ties and the like.

20 27. The device as claimed in claim 25 or 26, wherein the mouthpiece includes a standard connector or connector mount to enable connection to an anaesthetic breathing circuit if required.

25 28. The device as claimed in any one of the preceding claims, wherein the device is manufactured from a biocompatible partially resilient material.

30 29. The device as claimed in anyone of claims 1 to 27, wherein the device is formed from a biocompatible shape memory alloy whereby the device is flexible at room temperature, but conforms to a hook formation when heated to a predetermined temperature consistent with that expected in the patient's airway.